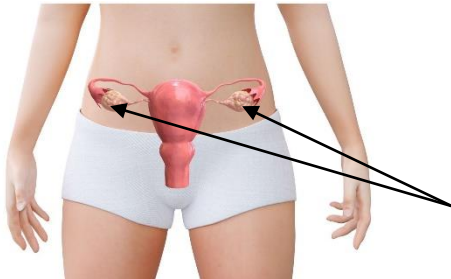


# Polycystic ovary syndrome



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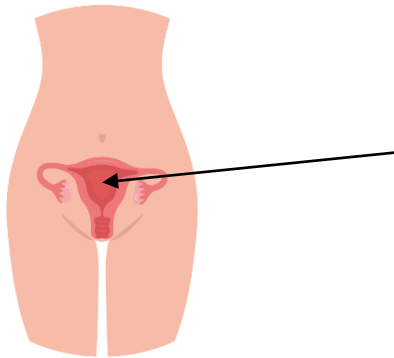
Polycystic ovary syndrome is also known as PCOS.



It is a health condition that affects how your **ovaries** work.

**Ovaries** are the part of your body that releases an egg once a month.

The egg travels along your fallopian tubes and down to your **womb**.



This process is called **ovulation**.

Your **womb** is the part of the body where a baby grows if you are pregnant.

Despite this health condition being called 'polycystic ovary syndrome', there are no cysts on the ovaries.



PCOS can cause irregular ovulation – when an egg is released some months and not others.

PCOS can make ovulation not happen.

PCOS can make it difficult to get pregnant.



PCOS can also affect your **metabolism**.

**Metabolism** is how your body changes food into energy.

PCOS can make it easy to put weight on and make it more difficult to lose weight.

## Symptoms

A **symptom** is a sign that you have an illness or health condition.

You are born with PCOS, but symptoms often start during **puberty**.



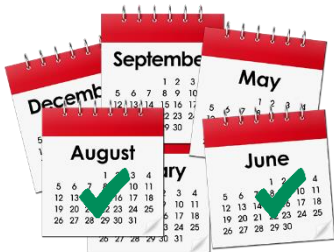
**Puberty** is when your body changes from being a child to being a young adult.

Some people get PCOS symptoms later, up to their early twenties.

The main symptoms are:

- [irregular periods](#) - periods that do not come every month.

You should have at least 3 or 4 periods a year if you are not using hormonal contraception like the Pill, patch, implant or injection.





- extra hair on your face or body  
This is caused by slightly higher levels of 'male' hormones called androgen in your body.



Other symptoms can include:



- putting on weight
- losing some of the hair on your head
- the hair on your head getting thinner



- oily skin or acne - very bad spots
- finding it difficult to get pregnant



People who have PCOS can get depression - feeling sad and worried.

People with PCOS can have problems with their [mental health](#).



PCOS could make it more likely that you get some other health conditions, like type 2 diabetes or high cholesterol.

Speak to your doctor if you have symptoms and you are not pregnant or on hormone treatment.

## Causes

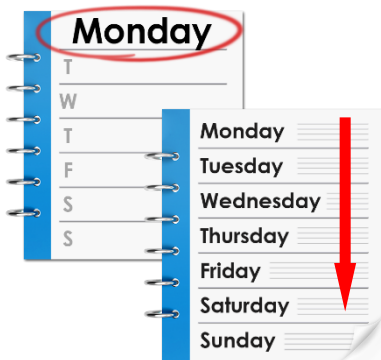


We do not know exactly what causes PCOS.

If someone in your family has PCOS is is more likely you may have it too.

You should let your doctor know if someone in your family has PCOS.

## Diagnosis - how they decide if you have PCOS.



Your doctor will talk to you about your symptoms.

It can be helpful to keep a note of:

- the dates that your periods start and end
- the PCOS symptoms you have
- how the symptoms are affecting your life



You can do this using a calendar, a diary or an app.

This information will help your doctor.



Your doctor might recommend you have:

- some hormone tests or blood tests
- an ultrasound scan



If you are diagnosed with PCOS, you may be referred to a specialist.

## Treatment



There is no cure for PCOS but there are lots of treatments to help you cope with your symptoms.

If you want to have a family, treatments can improve your chances of getting pregnant.



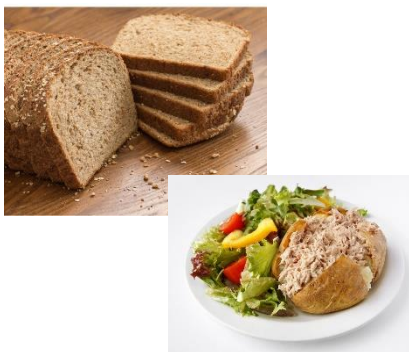
If you do not want to become pregnant you should still use [contraception](#) as you may still ovulate sometimes.



Your doctor will talk to you about what treatment is right for you and you can ask questions.



You should try to:



- eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- eat more fibre – found in foods like:
  - porridge
  - brown bread
  - potatoes with their skins on, like a baked potato or boiled new potatoes
  - brown rice
  - nuts and seeds
  - beans, lentils and chickpeas
- eat oily fish like tuna, mackerel and salmon
- drink lots of water
- eat less meat and less food made from milk - like cheese, yoghurt and butter
- eat less sugary food and drink
- try not to drink alcohol



- go for regular walks
- keep active, in particular [aerobic exercise](#)



If you are struggling with your symptoms your doctor can give you support.